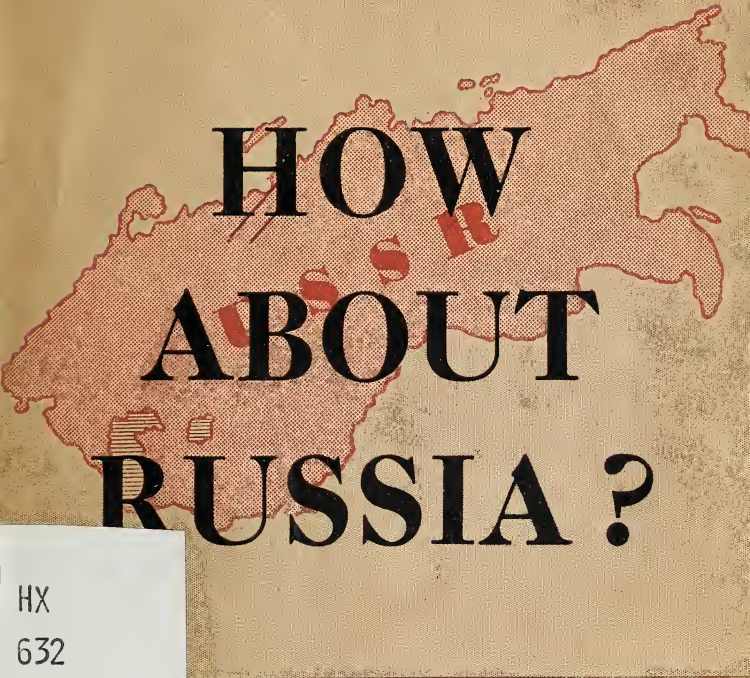


*A "Russia Today" Pamphlet*



# HOW ABOUT RUSSIA?

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No. 1284

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## TRUTH REVEALED

*by "SEARCHLIGHT"*

**ONE PENNY**

1. One feels impelled to utter a word  
of protest against the sophistry of

*This pamphlet is published by the Russia Today Society.*

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# HOW ABOUT RUSSIA ?

## The Truth Revealed

by "SEARCHLIGHT"

The violent controversy about Russia still goes on, as it has been going on ever since the war began. Sometimes the Press proclaims the U.S.S.R. to be on the point of declaring war on Germany. At other times the same newspapers know for a fact that Stalin is the ally of Hitler. Liberal and Labour politicians can't make up their mind what story to tell—sometimes they say the Soviet Union is pursuing the policy of imperialist grab, while the grabbing is good, that Tsarist Russia pursued: at other times they say it is "subtly working for a world Communist Revolution to end imperialism." The same papers back now one of these voices and now another. The British Government itself has more than once declared that it wants better relations with Russia. Yet in February, 1940, it was on the verge of going to war with Russia, by sending an army of over 100,000 to Finland to fight the Red Army. Two months later it was complaining that Russia was showing no enthusiasm for friendship with Great Britain.

Why is this? Why is it that British diplomats and British politicians, usually so skilled in handling other countries—the way they have swung the United States from isolationism to backing Britain through thick and thin is an example—seem to have lost all their cunning and all their understanding when dealing with the U.S.S.R.? Why is it that the newspapers have invariably guessed wrong in their forecasts of what the U.S.S.R. was going to do? Why was it that General Ironside made such a complete ass of himself in January, 1940, when he told the American correspondents that "the turning point of the Finnish war would come in May?"

This pamphlet is intended to help answer these questions. There is not the space in a few pages to do so in detail; but the object of the pamphlet is to supply the reader with those elementary facts which will enable him to give the answers for himself, and to read Soviet policy aright for the future.

## A BLACK RECORD

The very first thing to start with in considering Anglo-Soviet relations is the fact that the Russian workers have never had any more bitter, implacable and ruthless enemy than the class who rule Great Britain. Once you ignore this fact, and begin listening to the wishful thinkers persuading the Russians that Hitler is the biggest menace they have to face, you enter the road of wrong conclusions and painful surprises which the Press and the politicians have followed for so long.

British bankers and politicians first began to back the Russian landlords and capitalists, whose spokesman was Tsar Nicholas II, in 1904, hoping thereby to secure Russian support in the coming war with Germany. When the Russian people rose in the first great Revolution of 1905, it was the City of London which floated a loan here and in Paris of £90,000,000, and thereby saved the tottering Tsardom. The Russian people have never forgotten that, nor yet the fact that British capitalists who invested money in Russia were among the most ruthless in their treatment of strikers against the frightful factory conditions which then existed. They have not forgotten that, when the corrupt Russian Tsarist Government dragged Russia into the war with Germany three days before Britain ventured to declare war, only a tithe of the arms which the huge Russian forces required from abroad for such a war ever came. In consequence 4,000,000 of the flower of Russia's manhood perished between 1914 and the beginning of 1917—four times as many as Britain lost, twice as many as France lost. Then in 1917, when the second Russian Revolution took place, and a Government of pro-Ally Liberals and Labour men was in power under Kerensky, it was the British Government which was most instrumental in driving the Russian army into a hopeless and bloody final offensive against the German Army, which had ten guns and twenty machine guns to the Russians' one. Then came the third (Bolshevik) Revolution of November, 1917, in which the workers seized power in the towns, and the peasants seized power in the countryside, as allies of the workmen. The Soviet Government, elected by a Congress of workmen and peasants from all over Russia (chosen under the Kerensky Government) was set up, with the express object of handing over the land to the peasants, the factories to the working

class State, ensuring bread for everybody, and securing a general peace.

The Russian workers remember that it was the British Government which took the lead in thwarting their efforts, rejecting the Russian proposal for a Peace Conference based on the principle of no annexations and no indemnities, even though a general strike took place in Austria for these demands and over a million workers went on strike in Germany. The Russians were therefore left to face the Germans alone. They had to sign the shameful peace of Brest Litovsk—and the Allied Governments were able, thanks to the undermining influence of the Russian Revolution on the German Army, to impose a similar peace on Germany at Versailles a few months later.

But not content with sowing the seeds of the present war in that way, the British Government took the lead for the next three years in organising the invasion of Soviet Russia by the armies of fourteen States, not only those of the Allies but those of Germany, Finland, and the Baltic States as well. The invasions ended in 1920, with the expulsion of foreign armies and the puppet governments they had created: but at what a cost! Russian industry and agriculture were crippled: it took them eight years to get back even to the miserable level of 1914 Tsarist Russia. Over a million more lives had been lost in the fighting. The little bill of about £1,200 millions, which the Allies presented to the Soviet Government for the capitalist investments and loans nationalised by the Russian workmen in 1917, was roughly one-third of the Soviet counterclaims for the frightful destruction and losses to property during the wars of invasion of 1917-1920.

As though this were not enough, it was the British Tories thereafter who headed every hostile movement against the Soviet Republic. The British workers had fought invasion of Soviet Russia between 1918 and 1920, and in the latter year they formed Councils of Action which prepared for a General Strike, when Lloyd George threatened a renewal of war. His plans were stopped, and subsequent workers' pressure forced him to sign a Trade Agreement with Russia in 1921. It was not until 1924, however, that the British ruling classes agreed to establish diplomatic relations with the U.S.S.R. (in striking contrast to their haste in recognising Mussolini and Hitler as the rulers of Italy and Germany).



In 1924 the first Labour Government signed a Treaty with Russia, settling outstanding issues on a reasonable basis of give-and-take; the Tory reply was to launch a General Election which they won with the help of a forged "Zinoviev letter," and then to repudiate the Treaty. From 1925 to 1928 Sir Austen Chamberlain was busy planning coalitions against Russia, at Geneva and elsewhere, and in 1927 the Tory Government raided Soviet offices in London on a trumped-up pretext, breaking off diplomatic relations with Russia altogether. They were restored after two years by the second Labour Government, but this time the leading London banks prevented any revival of the 1924 agreement. In 1933 the new Tory National Government all but severed relations with Russia again, because the Soviet Government had refused to allow the British Ambassador to interfere with Soviet courts.

### **"GO EAST, YOUNG MAN, GO EAST!"**

But these hostile activities are of secondary importance in the minds of the Russian people, in comparison with the records of the Baldwin and Chamberlain Governments from 1935 onwards—after the U.S.S.R. had entered the League of Nations and begun its campaign for collective security against aggression. The story of the policy of "appeasement" has often been told: what you should pay particular attention to is that aspect of it which consisted of thwarting every effort of the Soviet Union to secure peace, and of endeavouring to turn Hitler against the U.S.S.R. For this aspect not only explains Soviet views on the present war: it also explains many of the disasters suffered by Britain and France in 1940.

When Italy attacked Abyssinia, and the British people forced the National Government to impose sanctions, the U.S.S.R. offered to join in an oil embargo, and to stand by Britain in the consequences. The British Government refused. Why? Because, as British officials explained in London, the defeat of Mussolini would mean Bolshevism in Italy. At that time Mr. Chamberlain (though Chancellor of the Exchequer) was already mobilising the Tory Party in favour of a "Four Power Bloc," with Hitler, Mussolini and France, which would mean a free hand for Hitler in Eastern Europe.

Then came the Fascist-Nazi intervention in Spain. The Soviet Government waited for three months to see if the British Government really applied its professed principles of "non-intervention." Then, seeing that the British Government on the contrary was keeping the ring clear for Hitler and Mussolini, Russia began to help the Spanish Republicans to the best of its ability. Mr. Chamberlain became Prime Minister, and did everything in his power to encourage Hitler to keep peace in the west by making war on the U.S.S.R.

In 1938 came the betrayal of Czecho-Slovakia. The U.S.S.R. told Dr. Benes not only that it would carry out its treaty obligations—to help Czecho-Slovakia together with France—but that it would fight alone by the side of the Czecho-Slovak people. The offer was rejected, because the Czecho-Slovaks were afraid that in that event Britain and France would openly back Hitler (they had already threatened to "disinterest themselves" in Czecho-Slovakia, should it resist Hitler's demands). On top of that came the famous Munich Agreement—in which there was no escape clause, but which roundly provided that **in all circumstances** Britain and Germany would remain at peace. In other words, Hitler could safely make war against the U.S.S.R.

## **HOIST WITH THEIR OWN PETARD**

We come now to the very eve of the war. In April, 1939, the Soviet Government offered to sign a Triple Pact of Mutual Assistance with Britain and France, provided that all States in Eastern Europe were protected (not merely Poland and Rumania, which Britain had selected) and provided that a military convention for practical assistance to one another were signed at the same time. The British Government took six weeks to agree to the first point, another six weeks to agree to the second, and when after a further month its military delegates arrived in Moscow, the Soviet Government discovered that they had no right to talk about the Soviet Army crossing parts of Poland to attack Germany, in the event of war, but that it must wait on its own borders—presumably until the Poles had been crushed. This was equivalent to rejecting Soviet military aid altogether. Meanwhile, Hitler had won more successes in Europe, Mussolini had seized Albania, and a million German troops, with thousands of tanks and aeroplanes,

were massed on the Polish frontiers. Could there be any better proof that the British Government was out at all costs to draw the U.S.S.R. into a war with Hitler, without any obligations on its own part?

It is sometimes alleged that the Moscow negotiations broke down because the British Government refused to hand over the Baltic States to the U.S.S.R. This is quite untrue. The Soviet Government asked that **Anglo-French bases** be set up in the Baltic States, as part of the scheme of mutual assistance, and that it might help in manning them.

Let those who talk about Russia's responsibility for the war, because it signed a pact of non-aggression with Germany when all these manoeuvres came out into the light of day, ask themselves: "What do the Nazis fear most—a piece of paper or a threat of armed forces? Once Soviet help in the shape of the Red Army had been rejected by Britain and France, why should Hitler have hesitated any longer? What difference did the Pact make then?" The fact is that Hitler, at any rate, recognised Soviet strength when he came up against it, and swallowed everything he had said for years to avoid a clash with the Soviet Union; while the Tory Government was so far gone in its hatred of the U.S.S.R. that it gambled (at the expense of the British people) on Hitler's attack on Poland developing into a war with the U.S.S.R.

## **SOVIET NEUTRALITY**

With this background, the reader should not find it difficult to understand why the Soviet Union is neutral in the present war. It is a State in which capitalists and landlords have been abolished, and therefore the workers and peasants have a Government which pursues a policy serving their interests, and independent of the capitalists who still exist outside the Soviet Union. In this war, as in previous years, the Soviet Government has no intention of allowing itself to be used by any of the rival groups of capitalists. Surrounded as it is by capitalist States, the Soviet Union's one chance of salvation from the first has been to pursue that independent policy, trailing in nobody else's wake, not attempting to change the whole world to Socialism by itself, and keeping on friendly terms with every capitalist country that is willing to reciprocate. It is always ready to help those peoples who



are really fighting for freedom, as Spain and China can tell. The Soviet Union will obviously never be **finally** safe until the other main countries have become Socialist States as well : but until then it must take its friends as it finds them.

Least of all can the Soviet Union decide with whom to maintain friendly relations among the capitalist States on grounds of their political complexion. Asked one day which was worse—a Power which oppressed Germans, Poles, Norwegians, and Frenchmen, or a Power which oppressed Indians, Africans, and Burmese, a Soviet politician replied : “Both are worse.” The U.S.S.R. has to maintain good relations with States, be they ever so Fascist, which desire to be friendly, and to reply in kind to States, be they ever so “democratic,” which are obviously unfriendly. And the whole trouble in the present war is that the German Government has tried throughout (for its own reasons, of course) to be friendly with the U.S.S.R., while the British Government has almost achieved the impossible in its search for divers means of being unfriendly.

This is not to say that the U.S.S.R. is an ally of Germany. It has a pact of non-aggression with Germany, *i.e.*, an agreement not to attack each other. It may be remarked that the British Government for years refused even to consider such a pact with the U.S.S.R.

Some say that the Soviet occupation of territories formerly under Polish rule is a proof that the U.S.S.R. is an ally of Germany. Anyone who takes the trouble to look up the files of “The Times” or the “Daily Telegraph” for September, 1939, when this happened, will find two things—first, that the Polish Army was completely down and out when the Red Army came in, save for isolated fragments who had not the ghost of a chance to continue their desperate back-to-the-wall struggle against Germany : and secondly, that the Germans were much farther advanced into Eastern Poland than the present frontier, and had to retreat before the Red Army, in some places for over fifty miles. A glance at past history will, moreover, show that the territories in question were Soviet territories up to 1919-20, and that Lord Curzon himself acknowledged that the people were of the same stock as the Soviet Ukrainians and Soviet Byelorussians.

The U.S.S.R. has a trade agreement with Germany : but the Soviet Government has also on two distinct occasions

offered to negotiate a trade agreement with Great Britain, and each time the offer has been virtually rejected by the British Government itself.

The first time was in September, 1939, at Lord Halifax's own request. When the Soviet Government agreed, the British Government withheld its reply for a whole month, during which it encouraged the Press to conduct a violent campaign against the U.S.S.R. in connection with its proposal of pacts of mutual assistance to Finland, Turkey, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. The U.S.S.R. then treated its offer as null and void.

The second occasion was at the end of March, 1940. The then British Government held up negotiations for two months by correspondence on irrelevant issues : then, when the new Government had sent Sir Stafford Cripps to try and improve relations, and he had had the unusual favour of a long frank talk with Stalin, the anti-Soviet influences in the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Economic Warfare, and the Ministry of Shipping destroyed all his chances. They arranged the closing of the Burma Road without consulting the U.S.S.R. ; they seized the gold and the ships of the Baltic States when these became Soviet Republics and decided to join the U.S.S.R., they proclaimed that the Peace Conference must decide whether the Baltic States are rightfully members of the Soviet Union, and they made the same proviso about the new Danube Commission set up with Soviet participation after Rumania had handed back Bessarabia to the U.S.S.R.—although for twenty years the British Government had itself successfully kept the U.S.S.R. out of the previous Danube Commission !

### **CAN RELATIONS BE IMPROVED ?**

Some say again ; “ But better relations with the U.S.S.R. are not possible. Those who think otherwise are wishful thinkers. The Russians are trembling with fear of the Germans.” This argument ignores the proof which has been repeatedly given in recent months that the Soviet Union does not pursue a policy that is necessarily pleasing to the Axis—for example, in asserting its rights on the Danube, in protecting Sweden when the latter was menaced by Germany, and in continuing to supply China with munitions on a far greater scale than the U.S.A. and Great Britain combined.

It also conveniently ignores the fact that practically nothing has been done on the British Government's side to improve relations, and everything has been done to worsen them. The treatment of the Soviet trade offer of September, 1939, has already been mentioned, and likewise the campaign against the Soviet Union for strengthening its border defences. To this must be added the incitement of Finland to provoke the U.S.S.R., and the attempts to turn the subsequent war into an Anglo-French war against the U.S.S.R.—attempts which only failed because the Red Army broke through the Mannerheim Line months before the Allied High Command expected it to. It may be mentioned in passing that even such an opportunity as the Soviet request to Lord Halifax to mediate in the war with Finland (February 22) was arrogantly rejected.

There is another school which says : “ No need to bother about conciliating the Russians : events will drive them into our arms.” This was the school which successfully sabotaged the 1939 negotiations as already described, and then indignantly complained because the Russians had refused to fight Germany without the shadow of hope of assistance from Britain and France. It is also the school which encouraged first Rumania and then Bulgaria to reject friendship with the U.S.S.R., on the plea that this would be “ extending the power of Bolshevism,” and then were surprised when Rumania fell into the hands of Germany, while Bulgaria under King Boris looks like doing the same. It overlooks the simple fact that the U.S.S.R. is an independent Power with an independent policy, learned during forty years of independent working-class struggles against Tsarism. In short, this is an absolutely bankrupt school of thought which ought to be discredited. Both schools agree in saying, however, that nothing should be done about improving relations with the Soviet Union.

It may be said : “ Was there not a generous British offer made on October 22, 1940, to which the Soviet Government never replied ? ” In reality, the “ offer ” itself was a remarkable example of the sabotage which has been carried on in London. It proposed first, the *de facto* recognition of the Baltic Soviet Republics—that is, accepting their existence as a fact, but not legally—with the provision that the whole question would be reopened at the end of the war. Second, it promised that Britain would not enter into any group of

Powers hostile to the U.S.S.R.—when she is already allied to a group of Poles, totally unrepresentative of their own people, who proclaim themselves “at war with Russia but not with Italy.” Thirdly, it undertook to admit the U.S.S.R. to the future Peace Conference—as though a Great Power of that strength could be safely left out in any event. And in return for these “generous” promises, what did the British Government ask? Something which proved beyond doubt that the whole offer was mere window-dressing to take in the British public. It asked for a promise of Soviet “benevolent neutrality” in return—which the U.S.S.R. had offered as long ago as September, 1939, and which was prevented only by the hostile acts of the British Government already mentioned!

### **WHO IS GUILTY?**

But who is it, then, who is in fact holding up an improvement in Anglo-Soviet relations? Some used to blame it on to Chamberlain personally, or thought that the entry of Labour into the Government would make a change. But since May, 1940, Churchill, not Chamberlain, has been Prime Minister, and several representatives of the Labour Party have been in the Cabinet. Yet relations with the U.S.S.R. are as bad as they were at any time under Chamberlain, save for the actual period of British intervention in the Finnish war. It was under Churchill that the Burma Road was closed without consulting the Soviet Government—a Government whose goods were going over the Road, which is vitally interested in helping China, and which has shown repeatedly that it is not afraid of attacks by the Japanese. It was under Churchill, again, that the British Government refused to recognise the Soviet regime in the Baltic States, and seized their property, just at the moment when relations with the U.S.S.R. showed a chance of improving. It should be borne in mind that the Baltic States had all been Soviet Republics in 1919, and had been overthrown by co-operation between the British Fleet, the Polish Army, and a German expeditionary corps, specially left in the Baltic States for the purpose under the Treaty of Versailles. It was under Churchill that the provocative Note about the Danube Commission, referred to earlier, was sent. Moreover, it was a member of Churchill's War Cabinet—Mr. Bevin—who dared publicly to charge the U.S.S.R. with responsibility for strikes in Great Britain, and to stir up feelings against the U.S.S.R. by such lying accusations.

Others blame bad relations on to Lord Halifax, or even on to wicked Foreign Office officials : and pin their hopes to the appointment of Mr. Eden as Foreign Secretary once again. This is a case of wishful blindness pure and simple. Just as the Foreign Office officials would be powerless to sabotage if Lord Halifax had threatened them with the consequences of opposing his policy, so Lord Halifax would have been powerless to sabotage had the War Cabinet told him that it wanted better relations with the Soviet Union, and must have them. In short, the responsibility is that of the Government, and not of individuals. It remains to be seen whether the Government's policy has changed with the appointment of Mr. Eden. It must not be forgotten, in any case, that Mr. Eden took an active part in the earlier stages of the fight against the Soviet efforts to build collective security. It was he who rejected Litvinov's proposals for oil sanctions : it was he also who opposed Soviet efforts to get legitimate aid to the Spanish Republic, and then at least to ensure genuine non-intervention.

There is indeed serious reason for thinking that, so long as a Government of the ruling class of this country, organised by the Tory majority and the Labour leaders, who have repeatedly shown their enmity to the U.S.S.R. (as in connection with Finland or Mr. Bevin's wanton accusations against the U.S.S.R. in 'connection with unofficial strikes), British policy will remain hostile to the U.S.S.R. For if anything is clear about the Government's war aims, in spite of its repeated refusal to state them, it is that the Churchill Government is out to defeat Hitler for the express purpose of making Europe safe for reaction. Everyone will remember how bitterly the capitalist papers in this country reproached Hitler when he signed the pact of non-aggression with the U.S.S.R., for "going back on all his pledges to fight Bolshevism." When you consider the character of the various Governments recognised in exile by the British Government—General Sikorski, one of the leading reactionary militarists of Poland ; General de Gaulle, a monarchist who refuses even to accept the motto of the French Republic : "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" ; the Czecho-Slovak Government, composed in its overwhelming majority of anti-Soviet politicians, several of whom actively co-operated with the Nazis—you have a living proof of the fact that the destruction of Hitler is aimed at just because he proved a less reliable



enemy of the Soviet Union than was expected. In these circumstances, even the direst necessities of the British people are hardly likely to make the ruling classes accept better relationship with the U.S.S.R. For, as the Soviet Premier Molotov said about the Moscow negotiations on August 31, 1939, the British and French Governments were willing enough to accept Soviet help if it meant strengthening themselves, but were not willing to do anything which might strengthen the Soviet Union in return—and that consideration came uppermost.

### **WHAT WOULD WE GAIN ?**

So much for the Government. But what about the interests of the British people ? Would they be served by close and friendly relations with the U.S.S.R. ? We believe they would. Common sense dictates the same answer to anyone who faces the question honestly.

Better relations with the U.S.S.R. would mean that Britain would gain a powerful friend in those quarters of the globe where even the difference in political systems between the Soviet Union and Great Britain, and even the difference in attitude towards the war, still leave immense room for co-operation. The U.S.S.R. has given more help to China, in credits and armaments than Great Britain and the U.S.A. put together. The U.S.S.R. has repeatedly warned Hitler to keep out of the Balkans. If the rulers of Britain were genuinely concerned about helping the Chinese people, or about opposing any extension of the war to the Balkans, they would long ago have improved relations with the U.S.S.R. sufficiently to make co-operation in these spheres possible. What a different aspect would be given to the question of the liberation of India from national subjection, if other would-be aggressors against the Indian people could be held off by a free India with the help of the U.S.S.R. !

Britain badly needs timber, for which it is paying Canadian monopolist importers twice as much for the wood, and ten times as much for the freight. Similar timber, but of better quality, could be got in large quantities from the U.S.S.R. at much lower rates, and would relieve the difficulties experienced by the building industry. The shortage of certain other important raw materials, such as flax and hemp, and of many foodstuffs, could also be relieved by friendly relations with the Soviet Union. Yet it is

well known that trade negotiations in Moscow were brought to a standstill by the wanton act of the Churchill Government in seizing the ships of Soviet Estonia and Soviet Latvia and hoisting the British flag on them.

But in the sphere of the salvation of mankind from barbarism and the future peace of the world, Anglo-Soviet co-operation is more important still. Friendly relations between these two vast States would be an immense reinforcement of the peace forces in all countries, not excluding Germany and Italy. It would therefore be a heavy discouragement for the warmakers and preachers of "race superiority" everywhere, not excluding, therefore, Hitler and Mussolini. It would provide the basis for a European movement that would not only bring the war, with all its horrors, rapidly to an end, but could make provision at the end of it for a peace in the interests of the peoples, unlike both Versailles and the Hitlerite "New Order."

### **WHAT CAN BE DONE?**

That, no doubt, is the very reason why the Churchill Government has sabotaged and will sabotage the movement for better relations with the U.S.S.R. There is no ground for thinking, however, that the people are powerless to alter this situation. It was the anger of the men of Dunkirk that drove out Chamberlain, and dissatisfaction widely expressed that forced Churchill to make a show of improving relations with the U.S.S.R., by sending Cripps to Moscow. Organised effort can make that show a reality. The demand should go up from every kind of organisation concerned with the welfare of the people. But a special duty devolves on the Labour movement, since Labour Party leaders are in the Cabinet. Why have they done nothing to improve relations that is what they should be asked at every turn. And it seems probable, a Government bound up with millionaire interests continues to sabotage Anglo-Soviet relations, they must be swept away by the people's anger, as Hoare was swept away when he tried to sell Abyssinia in 1935, and as Chamberlain was swept away in 1940. The cause of Anglo-Soviet friendship, the keystone of world peace on firm foundations, will only be safe in the hands of a real People's Government, which will have at heart the interests of working men and women, and not of landlords and profiteers.

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